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In the Footsteps of the Early
Settlers in and About
Le Grand, Iowa

By
B. L. WICK



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PREFACE

This little volume is published at the request of many friends, who have personally known the characters described herein. It was also written with the desire, that these articles concerning the frontier neighborhood may refresh childhood memories to some and perhaps recall many of the incidents and happenings described in this rural community of emigrants, who came here to make their homes in a strange land, among a different race of people. They early made use of the free school system of our country and these young folks went out from this community and many became the leaders in the various settlements where they located. I have kept the dates subordinated in these narratives, as it is not a booklet of reference, but simply a story of some of the best known and the most interesting characters.

The bulk of this material has appeared from time to time in the *Le Grand Reporter* published by Corwin O'Neal who has kindly consented, that these articles may appear in this form.

— B. L. W

A SKETCH OF AN OLD PIONEER

Ole T. Sawyer was for many years a well-known citizen of Le Grand having resided in the village after retiring from the farm. He was born near Stavanger, Norway in 1843 and as a boy of ten summers emigrated with his parents to America on a sailing vessel coming to La Salle County, Illinois, which was then and had been, for many years, the home of hundreds of Norwegian emigrants. He died in Marshall County in 1913.

Young Sawyer was very eager to learn English, attended the public school and finished at the academy at Newark enabling him to obtain a certificate to teach in the public schools. Later he was married to Helen Hanson, who, as a young girl, had emigrated with her parents to America. In the early 60's, the father, with a large family, came to Marshall County and here Sawyer began life as a prairie farmer where he soon became one of the leaders in the community on account of the language he spoke fluently as well as being a sound and safe adviser in this community made up largely of newcomers.

He used to relate many experiences in going to lawyers with many legal difficulties and consulted such men as Boardman, Meeker, Holt, Caswell and several others. These emigrants failed to comprehend the legal advice given and Sawyer used to tell how Boardman had charged the client ten dollars for advice regarding a team of horses which had been stolen. The man refused to pay anything until the lawyer brought the horses back to him. The lawyer smiled and replied, "I am just telling you how to get your horses. You did not come here for me to get your team. The Sheriff will attend to that."

Sawyer used to tell many amusing stories about these Norsemen and about their questions and answers especially in crowds. Thus, during the Hayes and Tilden contest, a boisterous Irishman who was the owner of the threshing machine was telling these newcomers how to vote the Republican ticket and that he had been a Republican and that was the party to belong to. One of these Norwegians asked the man if he was a Republican to which the Irishman replied he was. Then he replied, "Aye tot you be Democrat. You be so rough." Of course this caused a good deal of hilarity in the crowd. Sawyer, however, explained that many of the Republican leaders had no doubt told such stories about the Democrats and that this man had heard talked often that the Democrats were a low and rough class of people.

Sawyer was a helpful and useful person in many ways. He was for many years a clerk in the meeting, acted as school director and held many and various offices and frequently the spokesman in going before the supervisors and other officials for the maintenance of roads and bridges, school houses, etc.

With some of his own funds, he was instrumental in the erection of a boarding school near Dunbar for the use of the young folks in the neighborhood.

After he retired to the village of Le Grand, he took a trip with some friends to the old country. This trip he mentioned frequently, as it had reawakened in him a love for his homeland that he hadn't really felt before.

He used to relate how he observed the peasants working in the fields doing menial work and perhaps for a small wage, but that they were happy and content with their lot in life and he used to add, "That happiness was not what you possessed but what you enjoyed."

He recalled the many happy days, when, as a barefoot boy, with stone-bruised feet, he had taken a swim in the mountain lake, had fished in the stream and skated upon the pond during the winter months and how downcast he felt when he had to leave his boyhood companions and depart on a spring day to make his home in a distant country.

During all these years, while residing in this country, he had had a longing to visit his native land and how happy he appeared as he spoke often of the friendliness of the people, most of whom were strangers to him, and he used to add, "that they got as much out of little as we did out of much."

The home of Ole Sawyer was for many years the stopping place of scores of emigrants who were always received in a friendly manner and he often helped them, to buy a team of horses or to get a position on some farm and sometimes even investing his own money in the purchase of a small tract of land on contract. It used to be said of him, "that he was seldom deceived in his judgment of men." A few years prior to his death, he sent for me to draw up a subscription contract in the raising of funds for the poor and deserving people of his native parish, such fund to be used for the purchase of an old peoples home. He had felt this to be his duty for many years and he now started this fund, with a contribution of one thousand dollars, to which many others later contributed smaller amounts. When the academy at Le Grand ceased to function, he felt it as a personal loss for his only child, a daughter, had spent a few happy years in attending this institution, where she had been a student up to the time of her death at the age of eighteen years.

The show and the glitter of life held little attraction for him but the beauties of nature and the outstretched prairie touched

him deeply and of which he spoke frequently in conversations with his friends. He was a person not easily forgotten. He will be remembered for the nobility of his sterling character and for his many kindly traits. In all his business dealings and they were many, he never proved faithless to a trust, which he agreed to administer. On my many trips into this neighborhood, it was always a pleasure to spend an hour or two with my old friend in whose family I had stayed while attending the academy.

He was desirous for some time of starting a small bank in Le Grand, which he felt was sorely needed in the community and he promised to furnish all of the capital if I would become cashier, — a most gracious offer which I after due deliberation declined on account of my youth and inexperience in handling other peoples money.

This old home is still standing and as one passes by, he stops to recall the people who once lived here and who had assisted so many landless emigrants by helping them obtain homes of their own.

With years everything has changed, except the overarching sky, the rugged hills and the bend of the majestic Iowa river, which in flood time spreads out over the lowlands. That home which retained so many fond memories of years gone by is now deserted. The place is not the same because the aged pioneer couple, who lived here, have passed to their reward.

OLD ACADEMY DAYS

I recall a cold winter evening in the late Seventies, — I shall not say when, that I first entered a two story brick building on the edge of Le Grand, known as The Academy. The performance was a play, the first that I had ever attended in my life and as my knowledge of English was limited, I failed to grasp the meaning of the story, but I recall vividly a pretty black haired girl coming out from behind the curtain, modestly dressed, chewing gum and pulling it out of her mouth with her fingers tempting a young swain to take it away from her. My desire then was to become an actor with such a playful girl for a partner, who thrilled the heart of a lonely emigrant boy who had just arrived from across the sea. I, shortly afterwards, removed from the vicinity but frequently recalled the handsome girl and the school she attended while the gum episode often lingered in my mind.

On a cold winter morning some years later, I became a student within these walls, but the girl was gone and I never learned her name. I had come with a desire to absorb some of the spirit of this well known institution and met the principal who received me with a hearty welcome, a person who had recently graduated from an Eastern college and seemed to possess a wonderful en-

thusiasm as a teacher and besides possessed also a love for boys and knew how to inspire the students with a love for learning.

The Saturdays were given up to roaming around the hills, down to the stone quarries to study rocks, down to Hammond's Mill and frequently to the timber along the Iowa river on some botanical excursion while the principal often trudged along with his jovial smile, with his encouragement and explanations about botany, animal life and rock formations.

Professor Cox had married a daughter of Joel and Hannah Bean, who had conducted some years before a private school near West Branch, Iowa, and where the mother of Herbert Hoover had been one of the pupils. He later became a professor at Leland Stanford University and had in his classes Herbert Hoover, who had, it was said, as a boy, trudged up and down these very hills and lanes, where he had spent some time with an uncle. After Professor Cox left Le Grand, Stephen Hadley became the principal. He was an ornament to the institution, as well as an efficient and able teacher.

While at the Academy, I became interested in the school's history and found that James and Charles O'Neal had erected this building in the early Seventies and that W. D. Jones had been secured as a principal on opening of the school in the fall of 1873, with one assistant, but with a large number of scholars. Henry Townshend was the first graduate in the class of 1876 and often came to the Academy and much interested in the scholars and in the future of the institution. He used to tell frequently how money was scarce in those days and that the promoters, his father being one, had to issue bonds which were to be paid in form of tuition for the sons and daughters of the bondholders, who later would be attending this school. Of course of these bonds I had none.

A number of years later, the Academy as well as Palmer college formerly known as the Christian Institute, were compelled to close for lack of patronage. To the old students, the place is still a hallowed spot and as one passes through this quiet village, he meditates over the loss the community has sustained in the closing of these two worthy institutions. I have since often meditated over the type of these early pioneers of the community who invested their hard earned funds during the depression of the early Seventies, and have felt, that these men and women must have loved humanity more and money less. They believed in assurances perhaps, which were never fulfilled, but they performed their duty to the community with a vision for which their descendants became the benefactors.

These private schools conducted at Le Grand did much for the young people of the surrounding settlements and perhaps more for those who had crossed the ocean, for here they were received

with open arms, and with an opportunity to become acquainted with the history, the customs and the language of a different race of people among whom they had settled. It has been the academies and the country schools of Iowa that have influenced the standards of life in many of these communities. These institutions were the mainsprings of opportunity for young people and they had teachers of ability and character who were able and willing to blend the treasures of the old and the new civilization into a forward looking race. These early teachers have never been given due credit for the interest they took in students, for their hard work for which they received small pay and frequently little praise and among these teachers I must mention Professor Cox as a unique character in many ways and I met him later after retiring from his duties in California, when he was very much interested in his former pupil, Herbert Hoover, then having entered public life and became later the only Iowa-born president of these United States. I grew to love this old teacher, what I saw of him and heard of him, I felt that he took a great interest in all of his students and especially in me. "It was not that he loved his Latin or the secrets of the sea, but it was that he understood the mysteries of me."

As I pass through the village located in the heart of Iowa, I often recall the words of an English girl who composed the following suggestive lines to wit:

"But, when these days of golden dreams have perished
And when despair is powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn my existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy."

After all, it is the memories of boyhood, as one recalls so often later, how these early school associations molded the character, mellowed the temperament and broadened the vision during the formative period of a student's life.

THE LIFE STORY OF ANNA OLSON

The story of the Norwegian settlement around Le Grand cannot be written without some reference to Anna Olson who, with her husband, came here in 1858. She was born near the city of Stavanger, Norway, March 31, 1832 and died at the home of her son near Paullina, Iowa, March 12, 1925, at the advanced age of ninety-three years.

It has been often said that "trifles often decide our destiny." Thus, in the spring of 1856 after the sail-ships carrying emigrants had left that port, a small ship bound for Quebec had to seek the shipyards of Stavanger for repairs. As the captain had

room for a few more passengers, Anna Ravnes was asked to join this group who wanted to sail for America.

After several family counsels, the parents of the young woman consented that she might leave her native home and thus to seek her fortune in the new world in the state of Illinois where there had been established a large settlement from her home land. After a long and tedious trip of eleven weeks escaping icebergs, subject to bad weather, the ship finally dropped anchor at Quebec and the passengers were placed on canal boats and finally on a railroad and arrived in Ottawa, Illinois where she secured a place to work in an English family by the name of Waite.

During the next year, Eric Knutson with a sister arrived in the settlement having made a trip to his homeland and they encouraged the young girl to accompany them to Henry County, Iowa where Knutson lived and was the owner of a large farm and offered her employment. She finally agreed to this, accompanied Knutson and his sister to Iowa and remained as a member of the Knutson family, although she was quite homesick and felt that she had gone further and further away from her home across the sea.

It was here that she met her future husband, Soren Olson who had crossed the ocean a few years before and was living in the neighborhood. It was also at this home that she secured as her first teacher in English L. B. Lewelling, Knutson's stepson who later became governor of the state of Kansas.

After her marriage in 1858, Thomas and Julia McCool were visiting in the neighborhood and were desirous of having someone take care of their stock and farm near Le Grand, Iowa. As the newly married couple had no immediate prospects, they accepted this proposition and removed to the McCool farm in Marshall County. Thus Soren and Anna Olson became the first Norwegian settlers in this county where in a few years a large settlement of Norwegian emigrants found a home. After a short time, they purchased a wild tract of land where they erected a house and some stables, where they resided for five years and then disposed of that property and purchased another farm out on the prairie some three miles southwest of Le Grand. Here her husband died in 1879. Emigration to Marshall County did not begin until about 1853 to 1860, the railroad being extended to Le Grand in 1863 although a post office had been established some years previously.

Joseph Davidson was the first white settler coming to the county in 1847 who was very accommodating and helpful to these Norwegian emigrants. With the coming of the railroad, Davidson desired to remove to Oregon and offered the Olson family to accompany them which offer the Olson's were about to accept. In later years, Anna Olson used to say that "when I saw the guns

Joseph Davidson had placed in his covered wagon as a protection against the Indians I felt that my husband and I must decline the tempting offer."

After the death of her husband, the widow conducted the farm alone but in order to be near her children who had located in O'Brien County, she disposed of her Marshall County land and purchased a section of land near the town of Paullina in O'Brien County and removed there in the spring of 1883 and which place continued to be her home until her death.

While O'Brien County had been settled in 1856 and organized as a county four years later, the land was held by speculators until the extension of the Hawarden Branch of the Northwestern Railroad in the late Seventies when actual settlements were made.

Here again Anna Olson became a leader of the second Norwegian settlement which she helped to found and where she displayed as in Marshall County industry, thrift, perseverance as well as sagacity and foresight in business matters. While she made her home in O'Brien County, she never forgot her old home in Marshall County and frequently visited here and was helpful in many ways among the pioneer settlers all of whom she knew well. Thus, she was also instrumental in the erection of a boarding school near Dunbar to which she contributed of her funds and for some time acted as matron in trying to assist the young folks as well as many of the emigrants in attaining a knowledge of English.

A movement had been started by Ole Sawyer to raise funds for the erection of an old peoples home in her native parish and in this she took an active interest and to which she contributed with many others until a fund of approximately nine thousand dollars was sent to this parish in memory of those who had left their homes in the early Fifties and Sixties becoming adopted citizens in this new country to the West.

She was interested in the colored movement as she had heard of many stories about the serious treatment of runaway slaves through Eric Knutson who, with others had been arrested for helping runaway slaves by way of the underground railroad which had been in operation in Henry County for some years. She also contributed to various charities and never refused help where she believed that help and assistance was needed.

The show and the glitter of life had no attraction for her but she loved the beauties of nature in all its moods in this pioneer settlement where she had lived so long. She scarcely knew the name of a bird or a flower, but she would talk to the cows and horses as though they were blood relations.

She loved her home and her family and her friends and her neighbors and always sought to be of service to others. This seemed to be the keynote of her existence. She loved people and

showed hospitality to tramps and others who passed her home. The Indian squaws would make their tours of the community and beg for flour, meat and chickens. She would always give them some, divide it among them and then give them a good lecture that they should not beg but go to work. She used to laugh about it in later life and say, "I am afraid that my suggestions in telling the Indians how to live did not help very much." She was interested in many institutions located within the state and she would go into an old peoples home to call on someone she knew. They would begin to complain about their treatment. She refused to listen to such complaints and would at once assume an attitude of authority telling them that they were better off than if they were on the outside and that they had no right to complain. She would be taken to the home of the friendless and these homeless children would flock around her. Her kindly smile and her musical voice seemed to attract these youngsters to her as if by magic.

At the fortieth celebration of the founding of the Norwegian settlement in the fall of 1898, Anna Olson was present and at the conclusion of services was called upon to give a talk. She responded by telling that vast gathering something of the hardships of pioneer life during these early beginnings in Iowa. She said that it was these hardships of the early settlers which made them morally strong and that leisure and idleness always developed a weak class of people. It is a truism that in order to understand a race of people, its history must be written out of the hearts of the women rather than from the exploits and labor of the men. After all, it is the invisible deeds of the women that count, and it is the noble women everywhere who perpetuate the traditions of any great race of people.

A stranger would be lead to believe that after a period of seventy years in the land that it would erase all memories of the native land. This was not true of Anna Olson. She was as much interested in her fatherland during the last years of her life as she had been during the first years. When a person returned after a visit to the old home, she would insist that he make a visit that she might ask questions about the land of her birth. Then she would relate how as a young girl she watched the sheep on the mountain side, that she would listen to the meadow lark that sang in the birch trees near her home. She would mention the green moss-covered stones and the highly colored heather which bloomed so beautifully. Then she would mention the mountain peak near her home where the young people gathered during the evening twilight and look out towards the West into the sea and wonder what kind of homes these early emigrants had found in the land far beyond.

Then she would mention with sadness in her voice the old trail

that lead down the mountain side to the old parish church, a winding road that had been laid out here and there with stones to step on in the wet places and rest stones along the pathway where the devout worshippers had rested going to and from this place of worship. This winding and uneven trail to her was as if hallowed by sweet memories because she had, as a young girl, often rested on these very stones placed there by her ancestors a long, long time ago.

Then she would sit silently for awhile and would recall the days of her childhood and youth and would remark "It would be pleasant to be there once more" and in the next breath she would add, "No, those I held near and dear are not there. They have gone to their reward."

Anna Olson possessed an exhalted character and few if any rendered a more genuine service to the community where she spent so many happy years.

HIS FIRST CHARGE

There came into the town of Le Grand in the early Eighties a young man by the name of Homer Clyde Stuntz who here assumed "his first charge" as a preacher in the little Methodist church in that village.

He was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania in 1858 and at that time referred to as about twenty four years of age. He had studied law and was about to enter upon the practice of his profession when he happened to meet H. O. Pratt who, at that time, was pastor of the Methodist church in Marshalltown. Rev. Pratt was an elderly gentleman, a native of the state of Maine, a graduate of Harvard, had been a successful lawyer and a member of Congress from Iowa and took up the ministry after retiring from politics. Rev. Pratt was a man of wide experience, of much learning and well known not only in the church of which he was a member but among all classes of people. The elderly man advised young Stuntz to go into the ministry as the church sorely needed this type of man. It was due to his influence that the younger man changed his mind and entered upon a different calling.

It was not long afterwards through Rev. Pratt's influence that the young man was assigned to the little church in Le Grand. He frequently visited in the Pratt home and obtained much valuable information from the lips of the older man who took a keen interest in the young man's future. Mr. Stuntz was a man of parts, young, energetic and enthusiastic in his work. He took an interest in the academy, in the school work and in all affairs of the community. He used to walk over to the station, down to

the Hammond Mill and frequented the quarry where he obtained knowledge of geology of that peculiar section of the state.

It would appear as though he was just preparing himself for his future work and he used all such information thus obtained in later years as he had a most retentive memory.

He was well thought of in the neighborhood, among church people as well as among others and all would have preferred to have him remain as pastor of this church but in course of a couple of years he was assigned to another charge. He was later elected secretary of the foreign missionary society, for a time stationed in the Philippines as well as in South America. Later he was sent to India where he remained from 1886 to 1895 and became gradually one of the leading men in the Methodist church and finally elected one of the bishops and assigned to the Omaha district and died in harness in 1924.

I heard Bishop Stuntz on several occasions. There was always something stimulating in his sermons which left a deep impression on all his hearers. In all his messages he had some point in reference to a higher and nobler life. He would now and then mention in his sermons and addresses that he had dreamed of wealth and a career in a political life, perhaps a judge upon the Bench but suddenly changed and came into the church without much hope of any high promotion awaiting him.

While the law fraternity may have lost a valuable member, the pulpit found in this new convert an enthusiastic, studious and commanding personality who did much in the upbuilding of the church as a missionary as well as an outstanding bishop in the Middle West.

He left an enduring influence not only on the community where he began his work in the ministry but in many parts of the world for he was always helpful and interested in every movement worth while in any locality where he might be stationed.

His text often was love of hope and happiness and that things would be better later on. The guiding star of his life was to be of service to others and as far as possible to unite the church with a social life of the neighborhood. The people of Le Grand still retain a high regard for the memory of Bishop Stuntz who spent the formative years of his life here unmindful of what the future had in store for him in this village where he had "his first charge."

CHRISTIAN GIMRE; AN OLD PIONEER

Christian Gimre was a unique character who lived for more than half a century south of Le Grand where he was well known and highly respected. He was born in Norway in 1825 and died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Caroline Meltvedt in 1918

more than ninety years of age. As a young man he had obtained work in the city of Stavanger but early realized that there was very little future for him in his native land and thus one spring day he took passage on a sailing vessel bound for America in the early Fifties locating in Primrose, Wisconsin. Here he obtained work as a farm laborer and here he was later married. He had some acquaintances in Marshall County, Iowa, where Soren and Anna Olson and others had settled and in November of 1860 he started out on foot to visit these people with an idea of establishing himself in a new country where land was cheaper than where he was then living. He arrived at Independence, Iowa one evening when he met a torchlight procession, with buildings decorated with flags and hunting and more or less shooting going on. He used to say with a laugh, "I thought they were giving me a reception but found the citizens were celebrating the election of Lincoln." The next morning he started on foot for Le Grand arriving at night tired from a wearisome journey but delighted with the prairie land that he had seen on the way and was welcomed by the settlers with open arms. He remained here for some time looking into land prices and made up his mind to return the next spring and locate in this community. The next spring he removed his family to Le Grand, purchased a tract of prairie land, began to plow, erect a small house, some strawsheds and began to enclose his lands with rail fences made by his own hands.

From the beginning he was looked upon as an enterprising, thrifty, successful farmer and familiar with the English language. He was often called upon to act in law matters, in reference to estates and frequently called in to arbitrate disputes that arose in the neighborhood. He was acquainted with nearly everyone of the old pioneers in Le Grand and the surrounding country and in his old age it was always a pleasure to sit down under the shade trees which he himself had planted, to hear him tell about the pioneer men and women with whom he had associated during these early years.

He would relate about going to the mill at Indian Town during the winter days and being compelled to wait all day to get his grist ground when a severe blizzard would come on suddenly so that these farmers from distant parts of the county were frequently unable to get home.

He early became acquainted with the Indians located on the reservation over the line in Tama County and they frequently came to his home to obtain flour, corn and other provisions. He was on friendly terms with them and used to take their part claiming that the Government had not dealt fairly with the Indians.

He used to tell many stories about these emigrants who had

come to the neighborhood and of one in particular set upon by dogs in the county seat where he tried to pry some stones loose and was hailed by a policeman who came along asking what the trouble was and he replied in his broken English, "This is funny country where people turn dogs loose and tie stones fast."

Gimre never found time to return to the land of his fathers although he was much interested in the country to the very last years of his long life. He used to relate frequently that he missed the ocean as well as the mountains and valleys and the relatives and friends he had left behind. With age, the frost of many winters, had not changed his heart although his hair and whiskers had turned gray. Up to the last he was interested in everything going on around and about him and was always ready and willing to serve others in various ways. He was conservative, careful and possessed a keen mind and a knowledge of conditions of the locality where he had lived so long. There was not the slightest trace of vanity about the man. His love of home, family and friends seemed to be the keynote of his very existence. To this home came many emigrants from time to time who were without friends and relatives and who had no place to go but here they found a friendly welcome and he would personally go into the neighborhood to find places for them to stay until they could be better accommodated.

If he had been a poet he might have repeated the well known lines truthfully:

"The world has little to bestow
It is from ourselves our joys must flow
And that dear cot our home."

His heroic unselfish career as neighbor and friend is embalmed in the affections of his neighbors and his many friends.

THE STAVANGER BOARDING SCHOOL

For twenty years there was conducted a Boarding School near Dunbar financed by Norwegian emigrants, who had come from the old country to seek homes for themselves and their children. They had no knowledge of English, very little money to begin with, but they possessed that innate ability to succeed, by working and saving.

These men and women felt that their children should have a better opportunity than they had had, and some school had been proposed from time to time, but none had taken the initiative. Finally some evergreen trees were planted, the money was raised, a building erected and school begun. Those pioneers who were backing this forward movement were the Sawyer's, Knudson's,

Thompson's, Stangeland's, Bryngelson's and the Tow families at Norway and several others.

The first teacher to volunteer was Anna Dewees, followed by Joseph Coppock, a relative of the young Coppock who lost his life with John Brown in the attack on Harper's Ferry. The later teachers were Anna Yokum, Nathan Hall, Walter Edgerton, Ben and Walter Thomas, and Lorena Starbuck from Ohio, who remained the longest and exercised a most wonderful influence on the young folks and on others in the neighborhood. Helen Tostenson, Martha, Julia, Lillian and Bessie Tow also taught at various times.

A boarding school can never succeed without a suitable superintendent as well as a matron. The leaders found such in these well-known persons: Jesse and Rachel Negus, John and Sina Mott, Anna Olson, Nicholas and Lydia Larson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hampton, Mr. and Mrs. Tillman Patterson and several others.

During the winter months, lectures were provided and various public entertainments were held for the entertainment of students and residents in the neighborhood.

Many of the students who attended during the winter months were newcomers, who had little or no knowledge of English, but who in a few months surprised even their teachers in being able to grasp the principles of the language, which they early realized was necessary in order to make them useful citizens of their adopted country.

Many of them later became teachers, farmers, business men and women, who since have exercised considerable influence in the communities where they settled.

Most people do not realize what it means to have a school of this kind in their midst. It is well to recall from bygone days what this little school has done for people living in this farming locality. What is true of this community is true of others in various parts of the state. The seminaries, academies and private schools all over the state exercised a wholesome influence upon young and old.

It is said that a candidate for Governor of Iowa ran on a platform "A red schoolhouse on every hilltop and no saloon in the valley." There was a time in Iowa when that was true, but not now, for the tavern has returned to wreck the morals of people, and to ruin the happiness of many homes, while the country schoolhouse has disappeared forever.

The fascinating story of these years, when this school was in operation is full of human interest. These teachers, who came from distant parts of the country, to assist the young folks in their aims and aspirations, wielded a far-reaching influence on the youth of their generation. It was a service willingly ren-

dered, which has paid a thousand fold in human happiness, if not in money.

DILLON AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Dillon is one of the smallest railway stations in our State although it bears the name of one of the greatest jurists Iowa has known. It is named for Judge John F. Dillon, who died in New York City in 1914 and whose family settled in Davenport in 1838. Mr. Dillon was selected as judge of the District Court, later of the Supreme Court of the State and in 1869 was appointed to the Federal Bench by President Grant.

It is said that when the Iowa Central Railway for a long time was in the hands of a receiver, the bond holders from the East were continually tormenting the receiver as well as the Court about the operation of the road as they wanted some of their money that went into the erection of the road, if possible. At one time Judge Dillon, while on the Bench, got angry and stated that he didn't need this position and if others knew how to operate and conduct the office better than he did, he was perfectly willing to resign and did so in 1879 when he removed to New York City and became the special attorney for Jay Gould as well as representing many of the corporate interests in that vast city. While Dillon, with its high sounding name, never grew being located too close to Marshalltown, the community surrounding this ideal location became one of the most thriving farming communities in the State. The early settlers were mostly Germans, most of them coming from the old country, poor in this world's goods, but willing to work and to save. They had been farmers in the old country and knew from experience that no soil however rich and productive, could stand cropping year after year without exhausting the soil. They early began rotation of crops, resting the land and soon discovered that the German method of farming was equally successful in the land of their adoption. During all these years many were homesick, wishing that they were back among relatives and friends, but they gradually became reconciled to new surroundings becoming acquainted with their neighbors and formed many friendships among the people with whom they resided.

They maintained the language of their fatherland, erected a Lutheran church in their midst, which is still supported by the descendants of these early pioneers. The early settlers took a certain pride in their homes, erected commodious houses, built large barns, planted wind-breaks and flowers and kept a garden filled with every variety of vegetables from cabbages to beets, which seed being frequently sent from the old country, as they

had an old belief, that no seed was quite as good as the seed grown on German soil.

The women took a keen interest in farm operations and did much work also in the fields. They gradually built up a community center where they gathered together for social as well as for religious festivities. The word "gemuthlichkeit" cannot be translated into English. It means, as is well known, cheerfulness, kindly disposition and coziness and much more.

This friendliness was early developed not only in the family but among neighbors as well as strangers who entered their homes. The descendants still keep up that old time feeling inculcated in the children when they were young. These early pioneers saw to it to keep the young folks at home as much as possible. During the long winter evenings after their chores were done, the family would assemble around the fireplace, listen to the legends of the fatherland and generally take part in singing the old folk songs which have been for generations so much loved by the people. I have talked many times with these old settlers of the horse and buggy days in this community and they have told me that those early pioneer days were the happiest times of their lives when they enjoyed the home comforts, the stories and songs about their native land. They have said many times and it is true that no race of people will long exist as a nation where humanity lives on wheels, that while the trailer may satisfy the ne'er-do-well and those on relief, it takes hard work, saving and perseverance for a nation to exist. True, while these farmers drive their automobiles, like their neighbors, they will tell you that an auto is only a machine to be used in a business way and not as a plaything to pass leisure days in all dressed up not knowing where to go and what to see.

One will hear now and then complaints that these early settlers demanded too much from their children, but one should recall that these parents in return bestowed much upon them and the children and grandchildren never for a moment complained and have never quarreled concerning their home surroundings.

There are many such communities in Iowa, settled by Germans, Scandinavians, Scotch, Irish and other aliens about whom the same story might be told. The prosperity of our State is in a great measure due to hard work, to the solid character and to the saving instincts of these early pioneers who crossed the ocean in sailing vessels without means but with a courage and perseverance to conquer all difficulties and to fight it out in spite of drought, cold winters and well nigh impossible tasks.

It must be remembered that these pioneer settlers were the first to turn the sod, to plant the crops, to erect the rail fences around their lands, to build crude loghouses and straw-thatched stables. They helped to build the schoolhouse and churches all of which

made the State an ideal place to reside for the coming generations.

Dillon and its surroundings is only one of the many communities in Iowa settled by those of alien descent. These pioneers came from a long line of honest, saving, God-fearing ancestors and have prospered on the prairies of Iowa in which they helped to make the garden spot of the world.

LIFE ON THE FARM IN EARLY DAYS

At present people require diversion, frequent shows, circuses and movies. Sundays are frequently given up to joy rides over the roads to distant parts of the state just for the pleasure of going some place. In pioneer days people enjoyed the home comfort which does not seem to appeal to the young folks of the present generation. Every small community had spelling schools, debating societies, singing schools and other entertainments which the neighbors all attended. It was frequently an enjoyable evening, profitably spent among neighbors who became more and more attached to each other and early developed a friendly spirit which has now been more or less lost sight of.

The red painted school house at the crossroad was generally the meeting place, where these entertainments took place outside of school hours and thus the school house became a social center for both old and young.

The country teacher was generally a person interested in school work and assisted to arouse a spirit of friendliness among all the settlers, which developed this spirit of helpfulness in many ways. The McGuffey Readers were found in every school district and the teacher interested the young folks in public speaking and in committing to memory many of the most outstanding and interesting parts of these readers. These old text books are now republished for their intrinsic value as standard literature.

In winter there were sleigh rides, skating parties, quilting bees and other forms of amusement with now and then an oyster supper provided with skill by some winning hostess interested in young folks.

The young men on the farm devoted much of their time during winter in cutting rails and posts in the timber, hauling stone with which to make cellars or for use in curbing wells. The harness was oiled and repaired and the farm machinery made ready for spring work. Everything was in readiness when the ground was in condition to be worked.

In early pioneer days, log houses were erected at a cost of from two to five hundred dollars, the neighbors generally helping to erect the buildings after the material was cut and made ready for use. These houses were small, about sixteen to twenty-

four and from eight to twelve feet high and would be sold or rented and frequently moved from farm to farm by use of oxen or horses during the winter season. The cattle was running at large on what was known as the common and the cultivated ground had to be fenced so as to protect the crops from livestock.

Barn raising was for years the most interesting event in any neighborhood. It would take from fifteen to twenty men to raise the rafters and every able-bodied man within a radius of eight miles would be on hand to help or look on for the sake of social contacts. They all had a good time, a bountiful dinner was served and the day spent most enjoyably. If the owner of the farm did not belong to the water wagon band, a keg was furnished the crowd and frequently if the son of the owner or someone of the crowd had an accordion, the day would end with a barn dance if a dance floor was provided. If not, the dance was postponed until such a time that such a place could be available. The sailor lads were in demand at barn raising time as they could climb the poles and adjust the rafters more easily than those not used to climbing. The young women of the neighborhood would generally come to assist with the dinner and for the further reason that they desired to meet the young swains of the neighborhood. The sailor lad who demonstrated ability in climbing, wrestling, foot racing or in any other sport became the hero in the eyes of the young maidens. Thus, during barn raisings, acquaintances were made which later led to engagements and marriage.

Barn raising was an event in the young boy's life and discussed for weeks afterwards as wrestling, boxing, horse races would take place after the barn rafters had been put up and especially after the effects of the liquor had begun to take effect.

There was always in pioneer days a good feeling in the neighborhood and if any farmer was unable to do his work on account of illness, the neighbors would always come to assist in gathering the grain, husking the corn and otherwise help in every way possible. This old custom is still in use.

It was such a spirit of fraternity and friendliness that built up a sturdy class of pioneer people in Iowa. They were contented because they were constantly occupied in some form of labor. True, money was scarce but food was plentiful and little money was needed as the farmers were self-supporting and able and willing to do any kind of work and satisfied with conditions as they existed on the frontier. The coming of the railroad changed the financial conditions of the West. The farmer now had a chance to get his grain to market. Before that time there was little profit in hauling grain to the Mississippi river with a team a distance of more than one hundred miles as it cost more than the grain actually brought in the market.

In conversation with one of these old pioneers recently, he recalled many of the strong men and splendid women, that he had known in his youth. He thought that the individuals developed a strong character, when conditions of life were more simple. He admitted that many changes had taken place and some of them not for the better, but he realized fully that we would not go back to the "horse and buggy days." Then, in a sorrowful mood, he said, "When will this spending era end?" He felt that he could not follow the present generation and that he was too old to give advice to the young folks of the present day. With a smile on his furrowed face, he repeated the familiar lines,

"I feel like one who treads alone,
A banquet hall deserted,
Whose music is hushed, whose guests are gone
And all but me departed."

A GENTLEMAN FARMER

One of the most unique personages who crossed the ocean and made his home for a time in Marshall County was Andreas Bertlesen, a member of a wealthy Stavanger family who had only one fault and that was he could never pass a bar room without going in. Christian Gimre had been employed by the Bertlesen family before coming to America and the family corresponded with him about their wayward and somewhat sportive son. He replied by stating that he lived in a community near the town of Le Grand where there wasn't a grog shop and where all people were sober and industrious and where the climate was most excellent and where land could be obtained at a bargain and he fully believed that if the son would become interested in farming in that vicinity he would be fully cured of his fondness for liquor and get away from his carousing companions.

On a bright spring day, the young man came to Gimre's home bringing with him a number of trunks and valises all filled with clothing, enough to supply an entire regiment. At first the young man was captivated with the country and loved its extensive prairies and traveled about on horseback getting acquainted with the Norwegian settlers and royally entertained. As he had plenty of means, he purchased a farm a few miles southwest of Le Grand, hired a family to do the work as he wanted to be a gentleman farmer. He took his airings on horseback in the mornings, longed for fried fish and a drink, as he had been accustomed to in the old country and then he would spend considerable of his time in the little town of Le Grand which soon tired him. He complained that there were no seats in the public square, no municipal band played and Arnold's hotel had no bar room and the Benedict

store had no lobby where he could console himself with a game of cards and a hot toddy. There was nothing for him to amuse himself in the town as dry as Le Grand, where all classes seemed to be opposed to the use of alcohol as a beverage.

It was not long afterwards that Bertlesen began to frequent the main traveled road to Marshalltown. At first he looked upon the bar room from the outside, but it was not long before taking his first drink that changed his habits and the old craving for liquor got hold of him. The American beer did not seem to appeal to him as he had been used to hard liquor and a lot of it. He remained in these places until dark and then the saloon keeper and his wife would keep him over night and sometimes during the next night. During these carousals he seemed to forget his farm, his stock as well as his promise to be sober and cared only to indulge his appetite in alcohol to the limit and having means he always found a lot of friends and hangers on as long as he spent his money. Bertlesen, in the bar room with his glossy hat, his ruffled shirt, his black coat, with his expressive dialect, in broken English, became an attraction for the hangers on of the bar room. Finally his friends sought the Courts in order that he shouldn't spend all his money carousing and he appeared in person before the prescribing judge who, after the evidence was introduced, told the young man that he would give him one promise that he might select his own guardian. Bertlesen stood up, admitted his faults and as he knew no better friend than the saloon keeper who had cared for him when he wasn't himself, he thought he should be his guardian. The judge smiled, but entered the name of Christian Gimre, as the proper guardian of Andreas Bertlesen, incompetent. This was rather a hard blow to this gentleman farmer and from then on, the so-called saloon acquaintances were not so numerous as they had been before. For a short time he lived a seclusive life, but felt chagrined at the thought that he could not in his adopted country be permitted to handle his own funds in his own way. Thus, he consulted with his guardian about returning to his homeland, which was satisfactory to the guardian who sold his property, made an accounting, was discharged and procured tickets and all expense money for his return in 1873. The young man was only provided with ten dollars for incidentals and begged for a hundred dollars, saying, "that he was more likely to get drunk on ten dollars than if he had a hundred dollars," which amount was finally paid to him in United States currency. On arriving in England, he wrote the guardian that he had gotten along all right and hoped to see his native land in a few days, but he died in England and never saw his homeland. His countrymen tried to help this young man get a start in the community like Le Grand where the saloon was unknown but his surroundings and his new friends

did not seem to help to cure an inveterate drinker who in early life had surrendered to the curse of alcohol. This habit he had formed in early youth followed him across the ocean and again took possession of him when he arrived out here on the prairies of Iowa. Such is the story of this peculiar, many-sided, individual, who had been brought up in luxury and splendor, but who could not resist the temptation of partaking of the distilled substance of corn, commonly known as whiskey.

THE LIFE OF A PATENT MEDICINE VENDOR

A unique character who came to the Le Grand community in the Sixties was Ludvig Holand. His father had been a school teacher in the old country and the son early took to a seafaring life and for a number of years sailed the Seven Seas having picked up a knowledge of English and much information. Getting tired of this life on the high seas, he drifted into New York City and having some acquaintances in the Middle West, he came on to Le Grand. He was not very strong physically and could not stand the work required in those days in this neighborhood for a day's work was from daylight to dark.

Having had an opportunity to use medicines on shipboard as administered by the captain to the crew, and being a reader of the Scandinavian paper circulated in the neighborhood, he discovered that various patent medicines were used in the neighborhood as advertised in those papers. Thus, he began life as an itinerant peddler of patent medicines such as Kuriko, St. Jacob's Oil, Sloan's Liniment, Lydia Pinkham's Compound, Hostetter's Bitters, Peruna and many other varieties.

He would go from house to house, leave the medicines without pay and come around on his next trip and pick up what hadn't been used and collect for the remainder. He got quite proficient in this line of work and for a number of years did a land office business. He could tell a good story at the dinner table, knew everybody in the neighborhood and was always a welcome guest and the people seemed to believe in him much more so than in the local doctors and besides he made no charge.

For years, one could see Dr. Holand, as he was called, sitting in the shade of some grove on a hot summer day or near a rail fence and study the birds and the flowers and would read from a book or a paper which he always carried in his bag. If a farmer came along, he would stop and chat with him about the weather and crops and the health of the family and about the emigrants who had arrived from the old country and news in general. He was everywhere acquainted and knew the peculiarities of people, their likes and dislikes and never took sides in an argument, but would agree with nearly every person in his viewpoints. He used

to say with a smile, "What's the use to disagree with people? You can't change them by argument and their views of life may be as sensible as mine and so what is the use to argue and get mad because others do not believe the same as I do." He personally got acquainted with a number of Indians on the reservation nearby and it was said that some of his remedies he obtained from them. How true that is, no one really knew, but he used to argue frequently that the Indian mode of life was preferable to the life of the early settlers who worked too hard and were too tired to enjoy the evening sun as it set in the West. He said that "The Indians lived well, wanted to use only enough land so they could raise enough corn for their own use and that the fish in the river and the game in the forest gave them enough food for their wants and what was the use to worry over the day tomorrow because you might not live to enjoy it."

Now and then he would become homesick and despondent and downcast and talked to his friends over the vista of vanished years and he seemed to linger along the lanes of memory. Then he would begin to talk about his seafaring life and say, "I wish I could feel the tang of the sea again and again revisit these many places that I have visited as a sailor lad in many countries." Then he would talk about the places he had seen, the folks he had met, of the many hazardous trips, in storms on the ocean where they sometimes felt they could never make land and he would become young again and enrich the conversation with his many witty remarks about his past life. Age crept on and he finally took sick. His own medicines did not seem to restore him. He was taken in by a kindly neighbor to pass the last few weeks of his life where he died in 1895, universally mourned by all.

He had spread sunshine everywhere and like Lincoln, he could say that "he had pulled up a weed and planted a flower where he thought a flower might grow." This is the life story of this remarkable, many-sided, cheerful and lovable individual, who lived himself into the lives of the people of the community and of which he had become a part.

The following couplet might well be applied to this good natured, kindly, cheerful and vibrant personality.

"There is nothing worth the toil of winning,
But the laughter and the love of friends."

A SKETCH OF AN EMIGRANT FAMILY

For a number of years, on account of the quota law, very few emigrants are permitted to land in the United States. However, we must bear in mind that many of the leading citizens of this country or their immediate ancestors came from the countries across the sea.

To tell the life story of some of these families and how they succeeded after arriving in a free country with free schools is an interesting story.

Of all the Norwegians who settled in Marshall County during the Sixties, no family has shown a greater development or a greater success in their adopted country than members of the Vinje family.

The story of this remarkable family in substance is as follows; There lived in the parish of Voss, a district surrounded by mountains, and a hundred miles inland from the sea, a widow with a number of children trying to make ends meet by saving and hard work. From this district, during the past century, have come to this country many emigrants who have made for themselves a name in the country of their adoption such as Knut Nelson, governor of Minnesota, congressman and later a United States senator. Also, R. S. Nestos, at one time governor of North Dakota, and an outstanding public-spirited citizen. From this district also came the ancestors of Knut Rockne, the outstanding football coach in his day.

The widow Vinje desired to educate her children more thoroughly than what the school system of her secluded valley provided. Thus, she corresponded with Asbjorn Kloster who had been conducting a private school at Stavanger for a number of years and a graduate of the well known Great Ayton Agricultural College located near Newcastle, England. Kloster complied with her request and sent one of his favorite pupils by the name of Mons Botnen as a teacher for the young folks in the parish of Voss. How much knowledge the young school teacher imparted to these children during the time that he was acting as teacher is unknown, but it ended by the widow marrying the school teacher, who gave up his teaching and devoted his time to manage the hilly farm hid away among the snow-covered mountains of the locality. Financial conditions of the country were bad after the Civil War in this country and to be able to get a living out of a small farm with a large family to support was not easy. The school teacher who adopted the name of Vinje after his marriage consulted with Kloster, whose brothers were residing in America, as to the advisability of settling in this new country to the West. After discussing the matter pro and con, the family concluded to sell their farm and stock and emigrate to this new Eldorado, of which much information had appeared in the papers in form of letters from various emigrants who had located in that country.

Thus, in the spring of 1869, after the farm had been disposed of, the family joined a party of approximately fifty other emigrants and set sail from the city of Stavanger arriving in Quebec after a rough and most dangerous voyage and finally reached Le Grand during the month of June.

Shortly after the arrival of the family, they purchased the Lusby farm located a few miles south of Le Grand with the funds they had received from the sale of the homestead in Norway. Here they began to plant, to work and erect rail fences which they found much easier than in the labors of erecting stone fences in the home they came from.

Due to the financial depression existing in the early Seventies, the farm was lost as they were unable to make the payments and the interest. This, however, did not deter Mons Vinje from beginning over again. He was used to trouble but of a hopeful optimistic turn of mind. He just bought another tract of prairie land on contract, turned the sod, erected a small house and made strawsheds for the cattle and enclosed the farm with more rail fences as he had done before.

The boys, when not helping the stepfather, worked for neighbors in the vicinity and during the winter months attended the district school. They had such teachers as the well known James L. Hill, a recent graduate of Iowa College at Grinnell, later an outstanding preacher, a lecturer and a leader in the Christian Endeavor Movement in this country, a person who was interested in imparting knowledge to the children of the Norwegian emigrants.

It was not long until the Vinje boys and the Vinje girl became teachers themselves. There are still living many in this community who had the Vinje's for their teachers. Aad Vinje soon became a favorite with the teachers who encouraged him to obtain an education. He later attended the Academy at Le Grand, Iowa, the college at Grinnell and graduated from the Collegiate and Law Departments in the University of Wisconsin.

All these children of this remarkable family were endowed with more than average ability. Guri, who adopted the name of Julia, became a teacher herself and married A. H. Dahl, a leading merchant in Wisconsin, later elected for the position of state treasurer of Wisconsin. Their son, Harry Dahl, was a candidate on the Republican ticket for governor of the state against Phillip La Follette, but was defeated. She died in the state of Wisconsin, well known and highly respected, in 1938. Another brother, Thorbjorn, was for many years a lawyer at Northwood, Iowa, and David, another brother, was engaged in the practice of law at Nevada, Iowa. Knut was a graduate of the Academy at Le Grand and became the first postmaster in the village of Dunbar and was an influential and outstanding citizen until his death some years ago.

I vividly recall Mrs. Ingeborg Vinje and visited in her home on several occasions. When the old lady got her pipe lighted, she would begin to talk about her struggles in the old country as well as in this country where they had sought a new home. She

was of an optimistic turn of mind and these trials she had passed through did not seem to have discouraged her hope of a future for herself and her children.

When she began to tell about her children, her face would light up with pride, and such a woman was deserving of being proud of such remarkable children. She told of her son, Aad, who had gotten into the third reader in one term in the country school and of her daughter, Guri, who was permitted to teach the district school after she had lived in this country but a few years. She would smoke on an relight her pipe time and again and recall the past in America, as well as in Norway, and conclude by saying that the family came from a long line of illustrious ancestors and that these children were fully entitled to all the honors conferred upon them by the citizens of a foreign land. Her husband, whom I knew well, was small of stature, a quiet, kindly person who led an active and useful life devoting himself to the farm and left a large unencumbered estate.

Aad Vinje became a sort of a hero in the community as he returned for short summer vacations to visit among his friends and associates where he had taught in the district schools for a number of terms. After graduation, he began the practice of law at Superior, Wisconsin, later selected as circuit judge and for a number of years was a member of the supreme court of that state. He possessed an impartial, impersonal and constructive mind, as his many opinions will testify to, found in a score of the *Wisconsin State Reports*. His English was perfect and we must bear in mind that it was his adopted language that he first heard as a twelve year old lad in the red painted school house, erected on the open, treeless prairie in Marshall County.

It is this type of people who have developed the Middle West. They have given us largely our laws, helped develop our social as well as our financial structure and we must recall that a large percentage of these people who helped to build up the Middle West came from the peasant class of Europe, seeking liberty and freedom and an opportunity to be of service. For the most part, these aliens soon took up with the customs of their adopted country and became leaders in many of the communities where they settled and for the most part, they possessed "that rare gift of the gods — common sense."

LIFE STORY OF AN EX-SLAVE

Among the older settlers in and around Gilman, Iowa, there are few, if any, who did not know Peter Rice, or, as he was better known, "Nigger Pete."

I recall him vividly, as he was the first Negro I had seen, and I associate that ebony face with all colored folks I have since met.

The questions, "Where was he born, and where did he come from?" were often asked. Even Pete himself could not have answered, for no public registry was kept of slaves. He used to say, when questioned about his early life, "I was born down South some place. I didn't know nothing about the State lines. I know that it was by a lonely mountain ridge with a spring hard by. I also recollect a large woman we called 'mammy', who gave us something to eat and cooed us to sleep. The Northern soldiers came into our country, and I was hungry and I just walked away. I was scared many times for fear the master with the bulldog might come and catch me, so I kept pretty close to the captain's tent. When the regiment came North, I followed, and we crossed over the big Mississippi river. When we got on the other side, Captain Stoddard he say to me, 'Now, sonny, you stand on the sacred soil of Iowa where slavery never existed. You are free.' That sounded good to me, and I always think what the old captain said, but I was not so sure how long the freedom might last."

It was under those circumstances that "Nigger Pete" arrived in Iowa with the returning troops after the Civil War and became a member of the William H. Stoddard family when in his teens. He could not read or write, but he was finally taught to write his name. That was as much schooling as he had. In the course of a few years he got a job with the Beale Brothers in Gilman, and remained in their employ as long as he was able to work. He soon became proficient in the care of livestock, and was useful in and about the grain house and yards of the Beale Brothers. He also developed such reliable knowledge of the value of hogs, cattle, and horses that the firm sent him into the neighboring counties to buy stock.

Many stories can be told of Pete in Gilman, where he became in a short time a sort of a prominent character in the community. A woman of his own race happened to be employed in the town, and as they were both lonely they agreed to get married. This wedding was the talk of the town and the largest wedding ever held, for the boys furnished not only music, but also the wedding cake and presents.

Pete was always a lover of horses, and in buying cattle and hogs for the firm he drove his own team. One day a man led a fine black mare into town, which attracted Pete's attention. He asked the man how much he wanted for this mare, and the fellow replied he would take sixty dollars in cash. Pete was not long in making this bargain, and counted out the money. The next day he purchased a saddle, and prepared to ride his favorite animal around town to show what a good purchase he had made. The mare had never been saddled so when Pete mounted she began to buck and kick, much to the enjoyment of the citizens of the town, but not so much to the satisfaction of Pete, who could not

get off without being thrown. The last they saw of him that day was as the mare galloped north along the Le Grand road with Pete still clinging to the mare's neck with both arms.

After this humiliating ride he skulked in his tent for a few days devising a way to get rid of this obstreperous animal. He hoped to make a trade. Presently he found a farmer named Peter Peterson, also a lover of good horse flesh, who lived a few miles north of town and had not heard of Pete's equestrian exhibition. The boys used to say that Pete's reason for trading off this handsome mare for a bay scrub was because she was so black lightning bugs followed her around in daylight. The trade was made, and Pete was to get ten dollars to boot. It was not long before the irate farmer returned and wanted to trade back, as the mare had kicked herself out of her harness and kicked out the front end of the wagon box. Pete never got the boot money.

Pete was often invited to go to Chicago with stock but he refused, saying that Iowa was good enough for him. Here he was a free man with the right to own property, and his oath was as good as anyone's. He was a faithful servant who always looked after the property of his employers. In the winter he would sit in the cold office all night, going out every now and then to see if the stock in the yards was all right. He was always good natured, polite, talkative, and a booster for the State where he had found good friends and a comfortable home.

With age came sickness and other cares. Though ignorant of his parentage, carried by the tides of war to a strange but hospitable land, and fearful of losing his freedom, he made the best of his opportunity. As his vision dimmed he could perceive in retrospect the misery and degradation of slavery which he had escaped. In his declining years he was grateful for his good fortune. At last his dark eyes were closed forever.

Glimpses of such humble and unselfish lives can be found in many localities. The story of Peter Rice — his faithfulness, his love and respect for those who befriended him, and his character — is worthy of commemoration. Few who came to Iowa loved the State more or served it more loyally. Born a slave, he achieved distinction in a free society and among people of a different race.

DELIA WEBSTER

A most eccentric and in many respects a remarkable woman lived in Le Grand for a number of years by the name of Delia Webster, but known to the entire community only as "Aunt Tibbie." I observed her several times as she was out in the yard around her little cottage looking after her chickens and a small

garden. She had come from Wisconsin to live with a sister, Mrs. S. Goodrich, whose husband had settled here in the Sixties, the owner of a stone quarry which he operated near Le Grand.

Delia Webster asserted that she was related to the Webster families in New England and was born in Ferrisburg, Vermont, in 1817. Here she grew up to young womanhood obtaining a fair education, later removing to Jefferson County, Indiana where she lived with a sister for a short time while she was attending Oberlin College in the state of Ohio. It was at Oberlin College that she became infatuated with the anti-slavery movement, while listening to such men as Charles G. Finney who came there in 1835 as a professor and in 1852 became president of the College. She also heard James Monroe, an anti-slavery agitator, connected with the College and later a member of Congress from Ohio. It was also during this period that Harriet Beecher Stowe's articles appeared in the press which later came out in book form, under the title of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," all of which helped to stir up this agitation against slavery. She also became acquainted with Calvin Fairbank who was also living in the vicinity and who was very much interested in the freeing of slaves. In an article which appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1893, Calvin Fairbank published an article stating that Delia Webster and he left Lexington, Kentucky with slaves and successfully crossed the Ohio river on a ferry and that they again returned to Lexington for the same purpose, when they were arrested. It appeared that Delia Webster pleaded guilty to the indictment and was sentenced to two years in the penitentiary, while the preacher, Fairbank, pleading his own cause before the Courts of Kentucky, got fifteen years. The arrest of the young woman created considerable stir in New England and she was later paroled to her father, who had come all the way from Vermont, asking for the release of his enthusiastic, but in the eyes of the Kentuckians, a wayward daughter.

Rev. Fairbank was a native of New York born in 1816 who lectured and preached much and died in extreme poverty. He alleged in some of his books and articles that he had succeeded in freeing many slaves and got them into Canada and that he had served in the Kentucky prisons more than seventeen years. It was said that Delia Webster had a manuscript telling of her experiences during these years in which she was engaged in the anti-slavery work but such a manuscript has never come to light. The zeal of the Southern planters to extend slavery into the newly acquired territory from Mexico and when slavery came in contact with free labor, it was met with much opposition by the people of the North.

Many well known and outstanding people like Garrison, Lundy, Lovejoy, Arthur Tappan, Abbey Foster, Lucretia Mott and many

others were engaged for many years in this forward and worthy work.

The Fugitive Slave Law was passed for the purpose of returning fugitive slaves, who had found homes in the North. Then the underground railway offered a system by which fugitive slaves were conducted to freedom into Canada. These abolitionists offered them homes at these various stations and provided food and assistance and otherwise defied the stringent laws prohibiting such activities, and it was in such work that this brave and enthusiastic young woman was engaged for many years.

After the Civil War, these anti-slavery crusaders were neglected and the work they had accomplished was largely forgotten. Thus, in her old age, after the family had moved away, Delia Webster remained behind, without means, in poor health and ignored by all, except a few neighbors, who brought her food and cared for her to the best of their ability. Thus, when she had become an object of charity, she finally found a home with a niece, in Des Moines, Iowa, where she died in 1904, at the advanced age of 87 years.

It might well be said of Delia Webster who had interested herself so much in a cause, to which she had devoted her younger years, as the poet writes:

“That the abolitionists who wrought in faith,
Have passed from off the stage,
But to coming generations, they have left
A golden heritage.”

How well they fought and what they have done,
Is found on history's page,
For people, not gold, doth make
The history of an age.”

THEY ARE TEARING THE OLD HOUSE DOWN

It is popular during these times to tear down old homes which have harbored so many of the early pioneers. They are tearing down one of these early homes in this neighborhood, just because it isn't modern. True, the old house may have needed repairs, window lights were gone and perhaps the roof leaked and it was not up-to-date, but we must recall that it has housed for many years well known pioneer settlers in the Le Grand community. There is always a feeling of sadness, as one passes an old landmark in the neighborhood, especially where one as a youth has passed some happy days. I have been informed that this old house had entertained many prominent people in the long past, people who wore tall hats, women who came in sunbonnets and dressed in the black garb so characteristic of that locality. The

husband had died many years before, one who had been a leader in the community where he had settled in 1859 with his family. He had donated ground for a cemetery, had helped finance the erection of a house of worship and had become deeply interested in the local affairs of the community. Here he passed away suddenly in 1874, leaving his widow and several children all of whom deeply mourned his passing. The widow survived him for more than fifteen years and was known to the entire neighborhood as Aunt Ragnild, although she was perhaps not a real aunt but to a very few. Emigrants from the old country came and went. Visitors stopped for a day or a night happy to have a word of cheer from Aunt Ragnild who seemed to take such an interest in everybody and in everything concerning the upbuilding of the settlement.

From her ancestors she had inherited a certain faculty of leadership and had acquired with careful saving considerable property, so she was able and willing to help many who were in need. By common consent, she was the most likable and one of the most generous women in the neighborhood, it was often remarked.

In this old home, weddings had taken place, babies were born, and the young grandchildren came to study their lessons and were put to bed by the grandmother, who was so fond of children.

In the back yard where she spent much of her time, she had planted lilacs and hollyhocks and looked after a large garden, as she was always interested in the out-of-doors. In the early springtime, she would wander on foot down the road to a neighbor, where there was growing a certain variety of bird cherry which had been brought from the old country and was growing in the neighbor's yard and which sent out a pleasant odor which reminded her of her old home across the sea. Here in the shade of these trees planted by her neighbors, she would sit down and visit and talk over the olden times when they were children and grew up to young womanhood in the old home. They would mention the song of the meadow lark, being the first harbinger of Spring, that sang so sweetly in the treetops around their mountain home. It was always a pleasant visit where they could talk over the days of their youth and of the happy days in the country they had left and which they felt they would never see again.

There was one peculiarity about Aunt Ragnild. It was this. Her manners concealed a sentimental as well as a generous heart. There didn't seem to be any selfishness about her and she was never out of touch with childhood and it was said often, "that in friendship she was a spendthrift up to the very last years of her long and interesting life." She always seemed to make others feel the joy of living, interested in young folks up to the time of her death in 1888, at an advanced age. Her horizon may have

been narrow and perhaps a good deal of her work was unappreciated, but by her attempt in trying to help the unfortunate emigrants during all these years, could not help, but sweeten their lives and make them more satisfied and cheerful with their surroundings.

Time has wrought many changes during the last half century. There has been a decided change in the way of living among the descendants of these early pioneers. Roads have been built, automobiles are common, large commodious houses and barns have been erected where straw stables stood before. There is found more comfort among the people than in the olden times, but I doubt if the people of today living in these various neighborhoods are more content and more happy and more satisfied than the pioneer men and women who began life on the open prairie in the long ago, where these pioneers laid the foundation for many a fortune, which since has been squandered and dissipated by their descendants.

But they are tearing down the old landmarks today, where the old pioneers long ago started their last journey down to the cemetery yonder, followed by mourning relatives, neighbors and many friends.

